

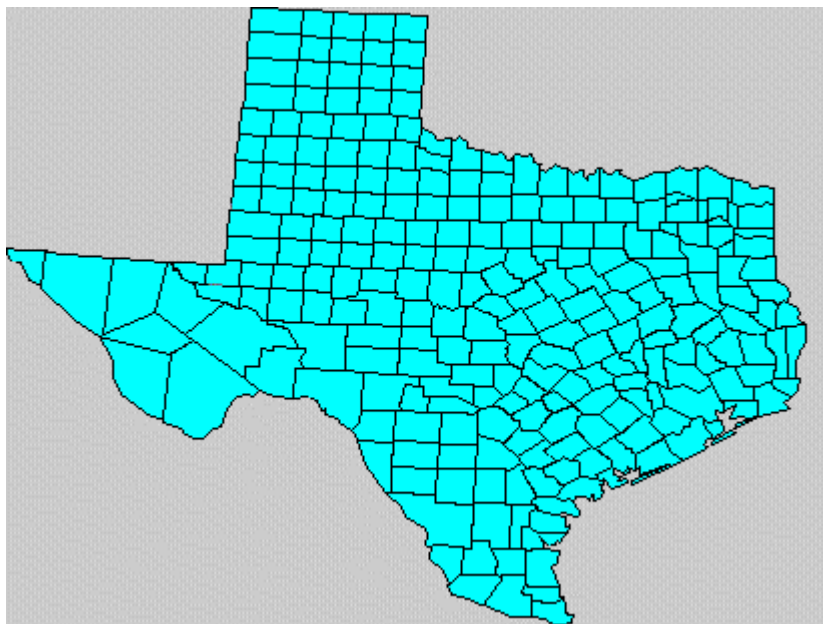
Office of National Drug Control Policy

Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse

Austin, TX

Profile of Drug Indicators

July 1999



ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse staff compiled this profile by using the most recent data available from open sources. The data presented are as accurate as the sources from which they were drawn. The information contained in this profile should not be used to rank or compare States or jurisdictions, due to differences in data collection and reporting methods.

Austin, Texas

The following profile contains information on demographics, political figures, funding, programs, crime, drug use, drug trafficking, and enforcement statistics.

Demographics¹

- Total population, 1990: 465,622
- Race/Ethnicity: White: 328,542, Black: 57,868, American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut: 1,756, Asian or Pacific Islander: 14,141, Other: 63,315, Hispanic (included in above distribution): 106,868
- Total population as of April 1997 was 567,566 .²

Politics

- Mayor: Kirk Watson
- City Manager: Jesus Garza
- City Council: Mayor Pro Tem Jackie Goodman, Gus Garcia, Beverly Griffith, Willie C. Lewis, Daryl Slusher, William Spelman,
- Chief of Police: Stanley L. Knee

Programs/Initiatives

- *Austin Gang Suppression Unit*³
Since 1993, when Austin experienced a dramatic increase in gang related crimes, the Austin Police Department (APD) has taken action by combining forces of the Hispanic Crimes Unit and the Street Crimes Unit into the new Gang Suppression Unit. The primary mission of the APD Gang Suppression Unit is to improve public safety through the interdiction of street gang activity by employing a proactive response to victim oriented criminal activity. The Gang Unit investigates cases involving gang members' specific crimes against persons and property.
- *Austin Crime Stoppers*⁴
The mission of Austin Crime Stoppers, Inc. is to assist area law enforcement agencies in the fight against crime in the city of Austin and Travis County. Official operations began on October 30, 1979. The organization is maintained by three entities: the media, law enforcement, and the community. Austin Crime Stoppers, Inc., is one of the most successful of its kind. Since its inception in 1979, the program has assisted area law enforcement agencies in solving more than 7,400 cases, recovering more than \$28,000,000 in stolen property and narcotics, and paying over \$740,000 in rewards. Each day of operation, an average of 1.08 cases is solved and more than \$4,000 of illegal narcotics and stolen property is recovered.

Cases Cleared by Austin Crime Stoppers

Nature	1998	Since 1979
Homicide	2	88
Attempted Capital Murder	0	15
Involuntary Manslaughter	0	4
Sexual Assault	0	33
Armed Robbery	4	706
Aggravated Assault	2	21
Auto Theft	2	245
Residential Burglary	0	1,666
Commercial Burglary	1	321
Felony Theft	2	552
Narcotics	44	86
Fugitives	105	237
Misc. Felonies	3	3,460
Totals	165	7,434

Crime and Drug-Related Crime⁵

The Number of Offenses Known to Police in Austin 1995-1997

Offense	1996	1997	1998* (Jan-June) ⁶
Murder	40	40	15
Forcible rape	270	283	61
Robbery	1,376	1,284	535
Aggravated assault	2,135	1,920	835
Burglary	7,575	7,511	3,424
Larceny-theft	27,187	27,485	13,553
Motor vehicle theft	3,695	4,465	1,692
Crime Index Total	42,278	42,988	20,115

* Due to reporting changes and/or incomplete data, figures are not comparable to previous years' data.

Travis County, 1998 Arrests⁷

Offense	Arrests	% of All Arrests
DWI	5,535	4.1%
Liquor Law Violations	4,111	3.0%
Public Intoxication	9,409	7.0%
Traffic All Drugs	367	0.3%
Possession All Drugs	4,270	3.2%
Traffic Marijuana	30	-----
Possession Marijuana	2,110	-----
All Drug Offenses	4,637	3.4%
Violent Crimes	1,255	0.9%

Drugs⁷

Cocaine and Crack

- Cocaine HCl is plentiful and of high quality. A gram sells for \$45-60. Small bags of powder are sold for \$5-10 as "hits" for injection with heroin for a speedball effect.
- The average price for a rock of crack is \$20; a \$20 rock ripped in formaldehyde sells for \$25 and produces a more intense high. Smaller pieces of crack, "Kibbles and Bits" sell for \$1-10. There are some reports of adolescents age 13-17 dealing, and crack houses are now seen in the Hispanic community. Crack is also being cooked down with vinegar and lemon juice in order to inject it. cocaine in combination with other drugs. A small rock of cocaine sells for ten dollars.
- The Medical Examiner's Office reports an increase in cocaine overdose and cocaine-related deaths during the first four months of 1999.
- The average purity of cocaine seized is 65-85%.
- African American communities continue to control flow of this drug. Much is also reported in the Anglo population with limited use in Hispanic communities. Use of this drug continues to increase in the "gallery" settings and is usually associated with prostitution and high alcohol use.

Heroin

- Black tar heroin is readily available and reported to be of good. Heroin is still primarily injected but there are reports of younger adults putting heroin in aluminum foil and inhaling the fumes of the burning heroin ("chasing the dragon") or they are snorting the powder form. These alternative methods of using heroin are seen in the sex industry business and in topless bars.
- The average price in the university area is \$10 per hit, while a balloon in other areas sells for \$20. A gram sells for \$80-150, and an ounce is \$1,800-2,000. In the past, an ounce sold for \$3,500-6,000.
- Of the 54 overdose deaths in Austin in 1998, 39% involved heroin, and of these deaths, cocaine was found in 48% of them. Sertraline (Zoloft) was detected in four of the heroin overdoses, and this new antidepressant may be taking the place of the benzodiazepines to help moderate the negative effects experienced when coming down from a heroin high.
- Black tar is converted to powder by freezing it, then cutting it with lactose in a blender, and finally adjusting the color. It is reportedly darker and stronger if it is cut with an acetone.

Marijuana

- Marijuana is readily available and is of medium to high quality, although the amount of outdoor-grown marijuana in Texas diminished in 1998 due to the drought.
- There are now three different qualities of marijuana in Austin. Commercial Mexican marijuana comes through the Laredo area, is referred to as "schwag" or "killa" weed, has a THC content of about 3.33% and costs \$50-80 an ounce and \$450-600 a pound. "Skunk" marijuana, which is a higher quality, also comes from Mexico and costs \$135-140 per ounce. "Hydro," "kind bud," or "chronic" marijuana has the highest THC content (up 22.3%); several people are said to be able to get an intense high from sharing a joint. This marijuana costs \$300-400 an ounce.

- There are also reports of marijuana being dipped in formaldehyde and sold as “Water” on the streets at \$5-10 a joint. People who smoke it are referred to as “wetheads” or “fryheads.”

Stimulants

- In Austin, methamphetamine is reported limited with low quality. Price is \$60-125 per gram, an ounce costs \$1,200-1,400, and a pound costs \$12,000. The sources are Mexican trafficking organizations and Bandito clubs.
- The methamphetamine is a brown peanut butter to rusty color and the texture is sticky, which discourages snorting. Some users are taking it orally, but most users are Anglo who inject it. It is used in the topless bar scene. White powder is rarely available.
- There have been recent arrests for the manufacture of “bathtub crank,” but methamphetamine is reported harder to manufacture due to difficulty in obtaining the necessary chemicals, and the “Nazi” is reported less popular because it is perceived as more volatile and dangerous.
- Five ephedrine labs have been seized in Central Texas since October 1998.
- There are reports that the amphetamine, Adderall, is crushed and snorted to get a speedball effect. This combination is being used by young adults around the Sixth Street scene and in sex clubs.

Depressants

- Diazepam and alprazolam are usually obtained by prescription and found on the streets and in the clubs. A 10-milligram tablet of diazepam sells for \$2-3, and the same quantity of alprazolam costs \$2.

Inhalants

- There is a reported increase in inhalant abuse by adult street addicts. Spray paint, gasoline, paint thinner, and products containing toluene (“tolly”) are the most popular chemicals, usually in combination with heavy alcohol use.

Trafficking and Seizures

- Department of Public Safety Crime Laboratory Service Annual Report, 1996: Total Amount of Drugs Analyzed (By Weight).⁸

Lab	Marijuana	Cocaine	Amphetamine	Methamphetamine	Heroin
	Pounds	Kilos	Kilos	Kilos	Kilos
Austin	22,509	193.00	1.19	10.90	3.90

Enforcement⁹

- In 1997, Austin had a total of 1,409 police employees. Of which, 968 were officers and 441 were civilians.

Treatment⁷

Travis County Substance Abuse Treatment Statistics

- In Travis County, 3,491 adult clients were admitted to TCADA-funded programs during CY 1998. This constituted 10.0% of all admissions. The average age was 36.0, 16.4% were married, 65.8% were male, and 24.9% use needles. In addition, 22.1% was African-American, 53.5% White, 22.9% Hispanic, 30.3% employed, 62.7% live with family, and have an average income at admission of \$7,925.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau Web site: <http://www.census.gov>

² City of Austin Web site: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/citymgr/basicfac.htm>

³ City of Austin Web site: <http://www.austingangbusters.org/mirror/history.htm>

⁴ City of Austin Web site: <http://www.austincrimestoppers.org/about.htm>

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States 1996, and 1997*, September 1997 and November 1998.

⁶ U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports January-June 1998*, December 1998.

⁷ Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, *Substance Abuse Trends in Texas 1999*, June 1999.

⁸ Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug abuse, *Current Trends in Substance Use: Texas 1997*, 1997.

⁹ U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States 1997*, November 1998.

This State Profile was prepared by the ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse is funded by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and is a component of the [National Criminal Justice Reference Service](#) For further information concerning the contents of this profile or other drug policy issues contact:

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